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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Lebanon - Paris and Washington at
Odds
PARIS - Thursday, August 10, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Lebanon - Paris and Washington at Odds

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

The Israeli offensive, negotiations at the UN to amend the Franco-American resolution and President Chirac's "possible intention to present his own UN resolution" as announced by Le Figaro are today's lead stories. According to Le Figaro "President Chirac is beginning to distance himself from Washington." The editorial, entitled "Chirac's Lebanese Score" commends Chirac for "clarifying" the situation: "If Washington does not amend the present draft resolution, he will offer his own, calling for a cease fire." Liberation titles its report "Between Washington and Paris, a Tug-of-war at the UN." La Croix's editorial by Dominique Quinio, borrowing from Chirac's description of lost time in the conflict, is

entitled "Immoral." Les Echos, commenting on President Chirac's remarks about "Washington's reservations" focuses on the fact that "Paris is now willing to put pressure on Washington." But in regional Les Dernieres Nouvelles d'Alsace, Jean-Claude Kiefer concludes: "The U.S. will decide on the ceasefire when it decides it is time." (See Part C)

Liberation and Le Figaro quote President Chirac in his Toulon press conference yesterday: "To abandon the idea of an immediate cease fire is the most immoral of solutions... I cannot imagine that either the Americans or anyone else would accept this..." Both reports emphasize Chirac's demand that "hostilities end immediately" and that the mission of an international force "should be clarified, with a fair distribution between the various participants." Le Figaro reports that "for the time being the U.S. refuses to make an Israeli pull out a prerequisite, and quotes Chirac: "The Americans appear somewhat reserved on this issue." Le Figaro also reports on President Chirac's defense of France's stance towards Iran, "an important regional nation which should be consulted," and towards Syria and al-Assad, "who I do not completely trust."

La Croix examines the role that historic French-Lebanese ties play in the conflict in an article titled "Lebanon Remains a Favorite Child of the Elyse." The article hints that these two countries are closer in opinion than France and the U.S.: "The discord between Washington and Paris is deep, despite appearances and the official speeches given since the beginning of the crisis." While La Croix grants both countries share the goal of neutralizing Hezbollah, the disagreement lies in the strategy; it especially emphasizes U.S. aversion to an immediate ceasefire. "Israel knows that it has carte blanche to continue its strikes against Hezbollah, which, for the American administration, dominated by the neoconservatives, is a terrorist organization of the same order as Hamas in Palestinian territories." Alluding to a paralysis of French diplomacy, the article concludes: "Even if Jacques Chirac's willingness to try to end the conflict is sincere, he does not have a solution to oppose the Israeli-American determination."

In Le Monde, Parliamentarian Pierre Lellouche pens a harsh op-ed against the U.S. and its lost battle against terrorism and calls on France and Europe to take the lead in resolving the situation in Lebanon. (See Part C)

FR2-TV, Radio France Info and wires announced this morning that London has pushed up its terrorist alert to high alert after dismantling a terrorist plot to put explosives in hand luggage on a British Airways flight from London to the U.S.

La Croix carries an op-ed by Luc Guyau, president of the Permanent Assembly of Agriculture Chambers, about the Doha stalemate at the WTO. Guyau refutes economists' theoretical claims that multilateral trade liberalization brings price down. According to Guyau, liberalization brings almost no gain for medium developed countries. As for Europeans, Guyau says: "We are not ready to sacrifice our agriculture under the pretext that other countries can produce cheaper!"

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

"President Chirac's Lebanese Score"
Yves Thiebaud in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/10): "President Chirac had no choice but to intervene, because France was increasingly stretching its position in order to satisfy Washington... and Lebanon, a country with which France enjoys privileged relations. The President's stance is now clear... a stance which brings to mind Chirac's distancing from Washington during the second Gulf war... France wants to retain its role of mediator and moderator between Washington and Tel Aviv's stance to do away with Hezbollah on the one hand, and the different demands of Middle East nations... France is the only European country to offer an alternative for a resolution to the conflict, maybe because of Chirac's 'emotional' involvement with Lebanon... Indeed his remarks about Syria, which he holds responsible for Hariri's assassination, have never harsher."

"America's 'Reservations'"
Jean-Claude Kiefer in regional Les Dernieres Nouvelles d'Alsace (08/10): "Although President Chirac has acknowledged America's 'reservations' at the UN, he still wants to believe in a possible

ceasefire soon. When things do not move as one would want them to, heralding optimism is diplomacy's last weapon... America's 'reservations,' which are officially based on the Lebanese army's ability to take over control... is in fact Washington's way to hold things up. Washington wants to give Israel the time it needs... to 'rid' Southern Lebanon of Hezbollah... As long as the U.S. continues to play for time, Israel will have the green light it needs... This is the interpretation we must give to Israel's extension of its ground offensive... This policy is full of dangers, which both Olmert and Bush must be aware of. But according to Washington, without whom nothing is decided in Jerusalem, the stakes are worth the risk. The 9/11 rhetoric is still going strong in the U.S. In the name of this logic, the war against Hezbollah goes well beyond the Lebanese battlefields. Seen from the U.S., this is a battle against Islamic terrorism and its various ingredients: Iran, Syria, the Iraqi Shia movement and the new Taliban... In the face of such determination, the diplomatic pas-de-deux at the UN, more or less orchestrated by France, is secondary. The U.S. will decide on the ceasefire when it decides it is time."

"Immoral"

Dominique Quinio in Catholic La Croix (08/10): "Yesterday, the prospect of reaching an agreement at the UN on an immediate cessation of hostilities seemed to be very far indeed... President Chirac in fact explained that the U.S. was reluctant to accept a text that took into account the Lebanese demand of an Israeli pull out. Is this Washington's way of playing for time to allow Israel the means to fatally wound Hezbollah and destroy its arsenal, which has proven to be more lethal than expected? For the French President this wasting of time is 'immoral.' He has asked for an immediate cessation of hostilities, then a negotiated ceasefire and the presence of an international force, in which France is ready to participate, despite past painful experiences... In announcing that France might be inclined to present its own draft resolution, the French President is emphasizing France's isolation and the difficulty in finding a consensual European diplomatic position. Yet Europe has the moral, military and economic strength to play a mediating role in the region. Its impotence is indeed immoral."

"The Ingredients For A World Crisis Converge"

Parliamentarian Pierre Lellouche in right-of-center Le Monde (08/10): "The ingredients for a world crisis have converged... North Korea, Kashmir and the Middle East represent a powder keg requiring immediate action... America has embarked on a war against terror, a solitary war. This unilateral war, without allies, without political strategy and which is founded on an illusory technological superiority has already failed in Iraq, is compromised in Afghanistan and increasingly criticized inside the U.S. It also fans the fires of anti-American hatred and leads allies to take their distance. Upon leaving Iraq, this attitude could turn America inward, more isolated than ever from other democracies because of its 'international boots on the ground' approach... In the present conflict, there are only three paths: either Lebanon can disarm Hezbollah alone, which is impossible; Israel is left to do it in its place thus destroying Lebanon, which is the worst possible solution, or the international community takes over. France and Europe must take the political and military lead of the international community in the Lebanese conflict to avoid a repeat of the scenario which developed between the two world wars." STAPLETON